

Joshua Daniel "Josh" White

(Folk Musicians)

Scott #3215

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Designed by Howard Paine



Josh White was the artist most responsible for introducing black folk, blues and spiritual music to white America and the rest of the world.

Joshua Daniel White was born in Greenville, South Carolina in 1915. He left his home in Greenville at the age of seven to support his family of six, and begin his career in show business, (after witnessing white authorities beating his father nearly to death for the late payment of a bill and sending him to an institution, where he later died from the beatings).

Joshua spent his next nine years dressed in rags and without shoes. He seldom had enough to eat and he slept in fields to hide from the Klan. He was witness to lynchings and a black man burned at the stake, as he led 66 different old, blind, black street singers across America (among them, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake and Blind Joe Taggart). During the day he would dance, sing, play the tambourine and collect the coins for the old men, and at night while hiding in the field, he would practice the guitar, and begin to develop his own unique guitar stylings and vast song repertoire. Josh began recording vocal and guitar duets with Joe Taggart in 1928 when he was only 13 years old. Four years later he would begin his solo record career in New York.

Josh White was the first African American artist to give a White House Command Performance in 1941. He was also the first to perform in previously segregated hotels and the first to earn a million selling record "One Meatball" in 1944. In 1945 Josh became the first Black artist to make a solo concert tour of America. first to make a solo concert tour of America.

Josh White went on to become a star of film and Broadway. He was a friend to Kings and Queens, and one of the closest black confidants and advisors to President Roosevelt for black social reforms.

However, Josh fell afoul of the anti-Communist hysteria of the McCarthy era and was blacklisted in 1950. During the later '50s although chronically ill, Josh was able to resurrect his career and resumed recording his music. He was commonly billed as "Josh White", 'The Father of American Folk Music.' Josh White died on September 6, 1969 of heart disease and other complications. He was 54 years old.

Josh White's recordings included, "House of The Rising Sun," "St. James Infirmary," "Strange Fruit," "Waltzing Matilda," "Nobody Knows You When You're Down & Out," "John Henry," "Frankie & Johnnie," "Free & Equal Blues," "Jelly, Jelly," "House I Live In," "Evil Hearted Man," "Lass With A Delicate Air," "Riddle Song," "Mean Mistreater," "Miss Otis Regrets," "Joshua Fit The Battle of Jericho," "Careless Love," ""Gonna Live The Life," "In My Time of Dying," "I Believe I'll Make A Change," "In The Evening When The Sun Goes Down," "Red River," "Freedom Road," "Betty & Dupree," and "Fare Thee Well".

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica

Encyclopedia Africana